

AN ADDRESS  
TO  
THE INHABITANTS  
OF  
**Darmouth,**  
ON  
THE VIOLENT OUTRAGE

*Lately committed in their Colon,*

BY A SELECTED BAND OF DESPERATE  
RUFFIANS.

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BY JOHN THELWALL.

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*Darmouth :*

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AN ADDRESS

THE UNIVERSITY

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BY JAMES H. HARRIS

## Inhabitants of Barmouth !

Hitherto I have forborn to address you on the subject of the late brutal Outrage ; thinking it proper to reserve my animadversions till all possibility of a repetition were passed away\*.—I, therefore took no other notice of the insult which your town, your police, your persons, and the very character of the nation at large have received, than merely to apprize your Mayor of the contempt with which his authority had been treated by a lawless banditti, and formally to announce the continuance of my lectures ; that, if illegal, *he* might interrupt them by official inter-



\* The handbill signed " A Townsman," was neither written by me, nor by my desire.—I am, however, far from feeling myself hurt at the imputation : it would have done honour to any head, or any heart, by which it might have been dictated.



ference ; or, if legal, be prepared to protect me and my auditors against future depredations.

This intimation could not, however, escape the aspersions of calumny : and an anonymous writer, who slanders the nation by assuming the signature of "*Englishman*," accuses me of "writing a most insolent and menacing letter to the chief magistrate," and "savagely declaring my determination of supporting my lectures by force of arms."—But as of this letter I have, fortunately, preserved a copy, properly attested, I shall here introduce it ; that the public may not only judge how far it displays a disposition "*to plunge both my country and countrymen into all the horrors of bloodshed and murder ;*" but, by comparing, in this instance, the accusation with the demonstrable fact, may be enabled to determine upon the degree of credit due to the narratives published on the other side of the question.—The letter is literally as follows :

" SIR,

" I understand it to be an established principle of British jurisprudence, that the magistracy is bound to protect the citizen in the exercise of every function which the legislature has not prohibited.—" That which the law does not forbid, the law authorises," is a maxim familiar to every



constitutional lawyer : and that the magistrate should protect every man in the enjoyment of his lawful privileges, is evident from the very nature and institution of magistracy. Nay more—as, in civilized society, no unauthorised individual, or set of individuals, is to be permitted to take the law into his own hands ; you must be aware, that it is the duty of the magistrate to protect even the supposed violator of the laws from tumultuous attack and murderous violence. It cannot, however, at this time, be a secret to you, that on Friday night last a peaceful assembly of two hundred people (men, women, and children) was attacked in my lecture-room, by a desperate banditti of about ninety persons, habited like sailors, and armed with bludgeons and cutlasses ; who continued their depredations, uncontrouled, for considerably more than an hour, to the great danger of the lives of all, to the actual injury of the limbs of many, and to the considerable loss of personal property.

“ I think it, therefore, my duty formally to apprise you—That, conscious of the legality of my conduct, and *confiding in the FUTURE diligence of the civil power*, I shall, this evening, at half-past five o'clock, continue my lectures, a Prospectus of which, for your more complete satisfaction, I take the liberty of presenting to

you.—You will perceive, Sir, by the act of parliament quoted in this Prospectus, that the law has made sufficient provision to secure the admission of magistrates into any place where they may suspect that any thing illegal is going on. In Westminster and in Norwich these hints have not been neglected. In both those places the lectures I am here repeating have been probed with the most scrutinizing observation : and, in both those places, their admitted legality has secured their protection.

“ Trusting that, for the future, the same consequence will follow in this place, I am, Sir, your’s, in due respect to the peace and good order of society,

“ JOHN THELWALL.

“ Aug. 22, 1796.

“ *To the right worshipful the Mayor of  
Great Yarmouth.*”

Unprincipled effrontery may call this letter insolent and menacing ; and accuse me of a determination “ to plunge into the horrors of bloodshed and murder,” because I did not flee from the town as soon as the arm of violence was upreared against me : but I trust, that the line of conduct I pursued, has proved at once my

eagerness to prevent commotion, and my determination not to be scared, by kidnappers and assassins, from the exercise of those rights of which it has not yet pleased a corrupt and tyrannical administration to deprive us. At the same time, I have left the lectures to speak for themselves to the end, without inflammation on one hand, or concession on the other, that those who had the curiosity, the justice, or the *courage* to enquire and judge for themselves, might perceive how far the sentiments I promulgated, justified, *in any moral sense*, a line of conduct in my antagonists which *the outraged laws of the country* must condemn and punish.—Yes, fellow-citizens, the laws must punish!—I speak not in the spirit of revenge: “vengeance is not mine;” it constitutes no part of my morality: nor shall I, for my individual part, appeal to any tribunal but that of public opinion. But if *those to whom the guardianship of the laws is entrusted*, do not make the offenders responsible for this outrage—law, and civil justice, and government are no more—*anarchy is sanctioned by magistracy itself*—pillage and assassination become the order of the day—our houses are no sanctuaries—our persons have no security—every man is warned that the dagger is at his throat; and that he must be prepared, as in times of the most savage barbarism,



by personal force to defend himself against personal violence.

Think not this language too strong for the occasion: the confessions of the vindicators of this outrage justify it to its utmost syllable. For my own part, I affirm, that the account inserted in "The Courier" of Monday last, is correct and faithful; and I believe no man of credit or respectability will sign his name to a contradiction of any circumstance there affirmed—unless, indeed, upon accurate examination, the persons seriously hurt should prove to be rather more or less than the precise number specified. But suppose, for a moment, that the handbill published August the 23d,—signed "The determined Enemy of Sedition," &c. an abridgement of which has since found its way into "The Norwich Mercury"—instead of being, as it is, an impudent farrago of designing and atrocious falsehoods, were true from beginning to end, what is the result?—why, that "Lectures on Classical History" are illegal, because the *crimes* of Greek and Roman tyrants (according to this curious vindicator of things as they are) bear so strong a resemblance to the *virtues* of our present government, that to expose the former, is a libel ("under the specious veil of classical allusion") upon the latter; and therefore it is to be "regretted,

that the crew" (a banditti of ninety armed ruffians!) "had not succeeded in *their first design* of securing the lecturer, and pressing him, for a time at least, into the service of his king!"

And how does this "faithful subject," as he calls himself, know what was the "first design" of this banditti? Is he principal, accomplice, or confidential counsellor in this desperate project to kidnap, transport, perhaps *murder*, an individual, who, if he had violated any law, might easily have been brought to justice, without making the captain of a pressgang attorney-general against him, and empanneling eighty or ninety sailors for his jury? If this advocate for kidnapping, this instigator to the repetition of atrocities hitherto unparalleled, really feels confidence in the facts and arguments he has advanced, let him stand forward, by name, and avow them; instead of muffling himself from view in the *sable cloak* of secrecy, and striking, like the ruffians he vindicates, in the dark. Such an avowal might lead, perhaps, to further discoveries relative to the project—so much boasted of by persons who pretend to be as well acquainted with the intentions of the banditti as himself—of impressing me, not into the service of his majesty, but of his majesty's good ally, the empress—of

carrying me on board a Russian ship, and transporting me, perhaps, to Siberia.

O madness of profligate malice!—And are these the extenuations upon which our enemies have the impudence to rest their cause? They did not intend, it seems, “to murder two hundred of the inhabitants of the town:”—they only meant, they say, to kidnap the man who had the audacity (or, as they sometimes call it, the “hypocrisy”!) to illustrate, by facts of ancient history, “The Principles of Legislation, and the Practices of Governments;—to drag him, with merciless violence, from every endearing tie of relative connexion, bury him in a floating hell, or transport him to the inhospitable extremities of a barbarous empire; there, far from the tears of a helpless wife, and the cries of his little infants, to ponder, at leisure, upon *the equal protection, and equal justice, of the boasted laws of Britain!*

Germans of my love! sweet nurslings of my care! know ye the unequal destiny ye are born to?—Laws are decreed, and halters are prepared to punish you for the least offence which penury, or intemperate passion, might provoke; but your father may be seized by the rude hand of violence, and your helpless infancy be deprived of



its sole support, while ye, poor little orphans! stretch forth your hands in vain, and the shameless assassins glory in their guilt—secure in the audacious plea, that they meant to murder no man but myself. But no, poor innocents! ye may yet sport in happy ignorance; and when the light of knowlege beams on your riper years, ye shall reap the harvest of your father's toil, and enjoy the protection of just and equal laws!

In the mean time, let Britons reflect upon their situation: for not over me alone, but over the nation, the bludgeon of massacre is reared. If I could be kidnapped, or destroyed in this manner, with impunity, what individual is secure?—The cruel system of press-warrants has long been decried by every humane and rational man; but, if they can thus be made instruments of political oppression and revenge, *lettres de cachet*, and all the detestable appendages of that old despotism we have been so long labouring to restore in France, were mild, humane, and moderate.—I am obnoxious to the present administration—Nature, I thank thee that thou hast made me so!—and, while they act upon their present principles, may the blood flow back to my recreant heart, may mankind loathe, and all animal existence shun me, when I cease to be obnoxious to them!—for their ambition has fal-

len like a pestilence on man and beast—has undone my country—has desolated Europe; and the four quarters of the globe have groaned under their domination!—But who can answer, that he may not, ere long, become obnoxious, also, to the same, or to some other administration, and be dragged, by their myrmidons, on board an English, or a Russian, man of war? To assail the life of *the king* is *only* hanging, drawing, and quartering; but, according to these *loyal anarchists*, to fall under suspicion of satirizing *the minister* by historic fact, or “classical allusion,” is to be instant transportation and death.

To the petty falsehoods in that farrago of profligacy and folly, I shall not deign a distinct answer. Some of them contradict themselves; and others have been already contradicted by the oaths of credible witnesses; whose testimony, I understand, will be shortly published in a *court of law*. The stuff about my putting out the lights myself is so contemptible, that I might rest satisfied with observing, that my crime has always been, not the extinction, but the diffusion of light. The fact is, every individual who has ever been at the lectures knows, that it would have been impossible for *me* to have put out the lights, had I been so disposed; some of them being considerably out of *arm's reach* in point of

height, and nearly at the opposite end of the room. It is the misfortune of these *gentlemen* not only to be destitute of all regard to truth, but of that discretion also, which might prompt them to print only such falsehoods as are not easily detected. I leave them, however, to their inventions ; while I enjoy the proud confidence of having discharged my duty with firmness and sincerity.

When the minister and his party thought fit, by an act of legislature, to prohibit me from lecturing any longer “ on the laws, constitution, and government, and policy of *these* realms,” I determined to lecture, for the future, on the laws, constitution, and government and policy of *other* realms ; conscious, that the principles of truth may be as well illustrated by the facts of one history, as of another : nor do I see any more “ hypocrisy,” nor want of “ manly hardiness,” in this, than there would be in continuing to wear one’s shirt and breeches, when government had stripped one of one’s coat and waistcoat. Unawed by the threats of power, unabashed by the fears or prejudices of my fellow-citizens, I have persevered in this new path, and have proved, that the empire of Reason, though invaded, is not destroyed : and when, in the last paroxysm of despair, tyrannical Faction appealed to brutal Violence, dis-



daining alike to imitate, or yield to, the turbulence of my opponents, I have continued my course to the period I had proposed ; and am now, in obedience to the calls of duty, and the invitations of friendship, preparing to repeat, in other circles, the important truths which oppressors may dread, but nations will rejoice to hear.

Inhabitants of Yarmouth ! lay these things to heart, and awake to the true interests of humanity !—Let those among you who attended my lectures bear testimony to the doctrines I have delivered. The tools of corruption and the supporters of priestcraft will naturally be averse to the exposition of such facts as I have felt it my duty to select ; and some persons, even of independent and ingenuous minds, may not be prepared to assent to all my principles ; for, in the wide ocean of political enquiry, how few can steer exactly in the same track !—but the most prejudiced of my hearers cannot deny, that I have diligently inculcated the doctrines of peace, of public and private virtue, of humanity, justice, and benevolence.

Liberty, I confess, is the deity of my constant adoration ; because I am convinced, that it is by Liberty alone that these principles can be

promoted.—Feeling this conviction, it is not the imputation of jacobinism, nor the terror of bloodgeons and cutlasses that shall drive me from my course. For defence from the latter, I must trust, as heretofore, to my presence of mind, my courage, the zeal of my friends, and my own good fortune ; and as for the former, I can only repeat the sentiment lately delivered among you, in my digression on the fate of Poland—“ If by jacobinism be meant the system of blood and terror established under the dominion of Rober-spierre, there is no aristocrat in the nation who detests jacobinism with half the ardour which I feel and cherish :—but, if by jacobinism be intended an attachment to the principles of Liberty—O that I had been a Pole to have died for jacobinism, and have manured my country with my ashes, when I had no longer any other means to do it service !”

JOHN THELWALL.

NORWICH, AUGUST 29, 1796.

promoted.—Feeling this conviction, it is not the  
 imputation of Jacobinism, nor the terror of blind  
 geons and enclaves that shall drive me from my  
 course. For defence from the latter, I must  
 turn, as heretofore, to my presence of mind, my  
 courage, the zeal of my friends, and my own  
 good fortune; and for the former, I can only  
 repeat the sentiment lately delivered among you,  
 in my digression on the fate of Ireland—"If by  
 Jacobinism be meant the system of blood and  
 terror established under the dominion of Robespierre,  
 there is no antagonist in the nation who  
 contests Jacobinism with half the ardour which I  
 feel and cherish."—But if Jacobinism be in-  
 terpreted as an attachment to the principles of lib-  
 erty, as I had been a while to have died  
 for it, and have injured my country  
 and my race, I had no longer any  
 means to do it better.

JOHN TRELWALL

London, August 10, 1793.



